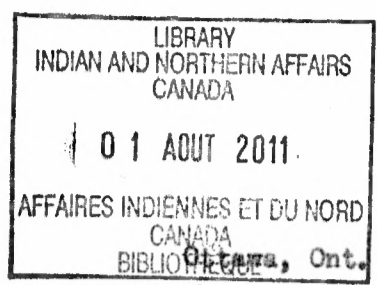


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Early history of the Algonquin Indians of Golden Lake

/ A. E. St. Louis

This article traces the claims made by the Algonquins and Nipissings for their hunting grounds along the Ottawa River. Both the federal government and the provincial government (of Ontario) refused requests by these bands for tracts of land set up as reserves. These bands were repeatedly asked to relocate to Manitoulin Island, a place where other bands had already refused to move



Treaties and Historical Research Centre

Memorandum:

Early history of the Algonquin Indians of Golden Lake

Official original and authentic documents preserved in the Branch's archives reveal that the Indians residing on the Golden Lake Reserve are descendants from the Algonquins of Oka.

The name Algonquins "Algomequis" (also spelled Algoumequins, Algonmequins and Algumquins), used by some authors to designate the Petite Nation, the Nation of the Isle, and the Nipissiriniens as comprising the Algonquin groupe. Champlain, however, limits this appellation to the tribes that dwell upon the Ottawa. The meaning of Algonquin, (agom, to float, and uke, land or earth) seems clearly to convey the idea that these Indians on the Ottawa "came by water from their country" up the Ottawa to the St. Lawrence. Champlain first records the word Algonquin and first gives them a place on the map of 1632 when he placed them in the Pembroke area.

Among the Algonquins of the Ottawa River (or Grande Riviere), no permanent missions were attempted by any orders. Long the chief highway to the West, the river was familiar to travelling missionaries, who frequently ministered to the tribesmen along its banks, either at the native villages or during the annual trading councils at the French posts of Montreal, Three Rivers, and Quebec.

Nicolas Catineau du Plessis, a direct ancestor to Quebec's Premier Maurice Duplessis, who is also known as Maurice Le Noblet Duplessis, used the Ottawa to do his trading. In his expeditions, this well-known coureur de bois, son of a trader of Three Rivers, ascended the St. Maurice in the fall of the year and came down the Ottawa in the following spring, loaded with furs purchased from the Attigamegs and Tete de Boules of the Upper St. Maurice River and from the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley.

In 1641, the missionary settlement of Montreal was founded by Maisonneuve. The Jesuits were the first resident clergy, and soon began

mission work among the neighboring Indians and those who resorted thither from the valleys of the Lower St. Lawrence and the Ottawa. In 1676, the Sulpicians, established in Paris by the Abbe Olier, one of the Society of Montreal, founded the Catholic Iroquois mission town of La Montagne on the Island of Montreal. La Montagne was abandoned in 1704, and the mission transferred to a new site at the Sault-an-Recollet, north of Montreal. In 1720 this was removed to the Lake of Two Mountains together with the remnant of Christian Iroquois of the mission established in the neighbourhood of the Quinte Bay in 1668. The Iroquois, who numbered 900 at the time of the removal, were soon joined by some Nipissings and Algonquins, of the former Sulpician mission town of Ile-aux-Tourtes. Thus was established the first permanent mission village in the territory of the Algonquins and Nipissings whose hunting grounds, from time immemorial, had been the lands comprised within the watersheds of the Ottawa and Madawaska rivers.

In regard to the Algonquins' hunting grounds, it is interesting to note what Daniel Claus, son-in-law and Deputy of Sir. Wm. Johnson at Montreal (1761 to 1775) says in his report to the Hon. H. Theo. Gramahe, Lt. Governor of Lower Canada on the 25th July, 1772 - See addendum Page 10.

In a petition addressed by the Algonquin and Nipissing Indians of the Oka Mission to the Earl of Dalhousie on the 29th July, 1827, they represent that they have been in possession of certain lands bordering on both sides of the Ottawa River and have always had the exclusive privilege of hunting on the same. The document bears the following endorsement:

"These complaints have been frequently made by the Algonquins and Nipissings of the Lake particularly in a Council held before Sir J. Johnson on 19th July, 1799. The latter document sets forth in strong but remissable language their claim to the lands in question as their hunting grounds and the consequences to be expected from an injudicious destruction of the Beaver by Settlers and intruders. They request that settlements be not granted further back than 40 arpents on each side of the River Ottawa. An extract of the Proclamation of 1763, annexed to this, seem to confirm the claim of these Indians to the land in questions "which have not been ceded to or purchased."

H.E.D.

The extract of the Proclamation of 1763, referred to by the Governor in his comments was made from a printed copy in the Office of the Indian Department, Montreal, with the following words written "At the earnest
(at the bottom)
Request of the Nipissings and Algonquins Indians I put my name to this"

(Signed) John Johnson.

The description of the Nipissings' and Algonquins' hunting grounds is clearly set out by James Hughes, Superintendent at Montreal in a letter to Col. D.C. Napier, Secretary of Indian Affairs for Lower Canada, dated 10th April, 1839. Supt. Hughes wrote for the information of Sir John Colborne:

"I have to represent for the consideration of His Excellency the Governor General, that for these several years past the Chiefs and warriors of the Nipissing and Algonquin Tribes (Who are in wandering state and depend entirely upon the chase for a livelihood), I have frequently lodged complaints against Individuals trespassing and making depredation on their hunting grounds which they represent to be the Islands situated in the river Ottawa as well as that vast tract of land lying on either side of that river and Little River from Pointe D'Original to Lake Nipissingue that is to say comprehending both banks of the River Ottawa and of the River Matawangué (called by the Voyageurs the Little River) to the height of land separating the waters of the Lake Nipissingue from those of the Little River, together with the Counties watered by the several tributaries streams of the River Ottawa and Little River running north and south from their sources and flowing into the said river Ottawa".

No better representation could have been made in support of the claim of the Algonquins and Nipissings to their hunting grounds than that made by Sir John Johnson, in a memorandum dated the 5th November, 1824, to His Excellency Sir Peregrine Maitland, Commander of the Forces. Sir John Johnson, son of Sir William Johnson and Superintendent of Indian Affairs from 1782 to 1828, although he had accepted the "two Deeds" signed by the Mississaugas on the 9th October, 1783, purporting to surrender to the Crown all the lands from Kingston to the Ottawa River, wrote as follows to the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada:

"By His Majesty's Proclamation dated the 7th October, 1763, you will find that it is expressly provided that the Indians shall not, under any pretence whatever, be deprived of the Lands claimed to dispose of them, in which case they are to be purchased for the Crown only, at some public meeting to be held for that purpose. Notwithstanding which extensive grants have been made of the Territory claimed by the Algonquins and Nipissings Indians, without any compensation whatever being made to them, although in all cases, where lands claimed by other tribes are required by Government, they have been purchased at a stipulated price, or some other compensation made to the Indians in obedience to His Majesty's Commands.

The Algonquins and Nipissings Indians, unlike the other Tribes in Lower Canada do not possess any lands from which a revenue is derived, and have heretofore depended upon their Hunting for support, and although they have not failed to view the progressive settlements of their hunting grounds as a breach of His Majesty's Proclamation, they, for several years abstained from making any representation on the subject, but finding of late that the settlement of the

Country, and the indiscriminate and injudicious destruction by the settlers, of the Beaver and other animals from which the most valuable furs are obtained, is likely soon to deprive them of the means by which they have hitherto supported their families, they, very naturally, solicited the interference of the Government.

"The territory claimed by the Algonquins and Nipissings includes a considerable portion of cultivated settled country. These Indians do not, however, expect that what is already granted will be restored to them, all they desire is, that Government would secure to them, by a written Instrument, the exclusive privilege of hunting upon such parts of the Tracts claimed by them as are at present unoccupied. That a Proclamation may be issued forbidding persons from encroaching thereon, and that in the event of the further settlement of their lands, they may be compensated for the same in such manner as will enable them to support their families."

From the foregoing, it would appear that soon after the Conquest the Algonquin and Nipissing Indians claimed the Madawaska and Ottawa Valleys as their hunting grounds by virtue of the Proclamation of 1763 and that of Sir Guy Carlton of 1766. It should be observed that the title to these lands was first confirmed to them by the 40th Article of the capitulation, which stipulated that "the Savages or Indian allies of His Most Christian Majesty shall be maintained in the lands they inhabit if they choose to remain there."

By virtue of this French title, assumed by the British at the Conquest, the St. Lawrence Indians (the Caughnawagas and the Lake of Two Mountains), who styled themselves also the Seven Nations, at a Grand Council held at Lachine the 26th July, 1795, laid claim "to the lands from the Seignory of Longueuil to Kingston". Alex McKee, who presided the Council Meeting reported to the Lt.-Governor on the 28th July, that "the consideration of the claim of the Seven Nations of Canada to the Lands from the Seignory of Longueuil to Kingston is of an extensive and important nature and will require infinitely more time and attention than my duties in Upper Canada will allow me at this time to give it. A full examination of the records of Office and all other evidence which can be procured, seem absolutely necessary to the final arrangement of this business. You will observe that their claim is from the Seignory of Longueuil North and South of the River St. Lawrence to Kingston.

It is worthy remark that these people should have solicited and received Lands from the French Government, when, according to their present assertion, they considered themselves the proprietors of all the Country".

Thus, the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs disposed of the claims of the Indians of Lower Canada to lands in the upper part of the country.

Finding themselves at the beginning of the nineteenth century between the alternatives of "tilling the ground" or of "starving" the Algonquin and Nipissing Tribes, then numbering about 600 souls, appealed to Col. Napier for assistance to 140 families to enable them to settle on Allumettes Island. The latter transmitted their request to T.W.C. Murdoch, Secretary of Sir Charles Bagot, on the 14th January, 1842, with the following observations of James Hughes, Superintendent of the Indian Department for the information of the Governor General.

"These Tribes have from time immemorial depended entirely on the Chase to procure a livelyhood, they know nothing of agriculture in any shape whatever, with the exception that some few families, from old age, sickness, or other casualties remain at the village of the Lake, these plant a little Indian corn, to support themselves but the great majority of these Tribes only resort to this village during the months of June and July chiefly for the purpose of receiving their presents and performing their religious duties, the rest of the year they wander about in search of beaver, peltries, deer etc. to support their families. The hunting grounds received and enjoyed from time immemorial by the Nipissings and Algonquins, were extensive. They extended from Pointe d'Original at the Head of the Long Sault on both banks of the River Ottawa to Lake Nipissing, a distance of 350 miles. - All the country and tributary streams, pouring from the heights of land north and south into the river Ottawa, formed also part of their hunting grounds.

These hunting grounds were rich, abounded in the most valuable furs and peltries and were stocked with sundry species of deer, from which they procured a livelyhood and clothing for themselves and families. These Tribes were some years back the richest and most independent Indians in Lower Canada. They are now the poorest.

It appears that a great part of these hunting grounds have been assumed by the Government and laid out into townships - for which lands the Nipissings and Algonquins have not as yet received a remuneration for a single acre.

These hunting grounds are now entirely ruined. These Tribes can no longer procure a livelyhood from the Chase and the Government should locate them on Isle aux Allumettes."

Before arriving at the "heroic decision" of abandoning their ancient hunting grounds and thus changing their mode of life to entirely different pursuits, the Algonquins and Nipissings again memorialized the Governor General on the 9th March, 1840, requesting an idemnification for that extensive tract of land extending as stated "from Pointe of l'Original on the Ottawa to Lake Nipissing". On July 19, 1841, T.W.C. Murdoch, Civil Secretary of the Governor General, wrote to Col. Napier, which letter reads in part as follows:

"I am commended by the Governor General to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. requesting a decision of His Excellency on the Memorial from the Algonquins and the Nipissing Indians which was forwarded by Mr. Hughes on the 9th March, 1840.

His Excellency had purposely abstained from giving any conclusive answer to the Memorial of 9th March, 1840, because he felt it impossible to hold out to the Indians the expectation that their prayer would be granted. In regard to a money payment for the lands which they formerly possessed it does not appear that the Government is bound either by Treaty or in good faith to make such a payment and, in the absence of a decided obligation of this kind, it would be useless to recommend to the Legislature such a grant."

Thus, the first Governor of the Province of Canada, Baron Sydenham, denied to the Indians of Lower Canada the right to be compensated for the loss of their hunting grounds in the same manner as were their brethren of Upper Canada for every piece of land surrendered by them within that part of the Country.

The setting aside of reserves for these Indians who had been despoiled of their hunting grounds - the only means of earning their livelihood - was considered by the Commissioners, Messrs. Rawson, Davidson and Hepburn, in 1844. After stating the nature of the claim, the Commissioners refer to the Report of the Committee of the Executive Council in the year 1837. They state they are unable to recommend that part of the suggestion that relates to the settlement of the Indians in the rear of the Ottawa Townships. They therefore make the following suggestions: -

"That steps be taken to induce these Tribes to remove either to the Manitoulin Island or to some other settlement of Indians in the Upper Provinces, in which the proposed institution and arrangements for promoting the civilization of their brethren shall hereafter be established, and that in the meantime temporary assistance, not to exceed the amount granted to their brethren in Upper Canada under similar circumstances, viz: £ 2, 10 s. per head annually, be afforded to them in order to remove the most pressing of their wants.

That considering the value of the lands sold on the banks of the Ottawa, and the revenue derived from the cutting of timber on the ancient hunting grounds of these Tribes, which has led to the destruction of their means of subsistence, this payment becomes an equitable charge upon the revenue of Crown Lands."

On the 23rd February, 1847, a petition was received from the Algonquin and Nipissingue Indians, asking for a grant of land on the West bank of the River Gatineau, and in forwarding the petition Lt. Col. Napier, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, reported as follows:-

"I beg leave to state that I entirely concur in the objections submitted by the Commissioners to the settlement of these Indians in the rear of the Ottawa Townships, and that with the present reduced establishment of the Indian Department it would

be impossible to exercise a proper degree of superintendence over them, if so located. I therefore respectfully suggest, that the Petition be referred to the Commissioner of Crown Lands, with a view to ascertain whether a sufficient tract could be set apart for these tribes in one of the new Townships fronting upon the Ottawa River, and, also, as to the prospect of obtaining pecuniary assistance for them, from the Revenue of Crown Lands, to the extent proposed in the Report of the Commissioners above mentioned.

I deem it proper to add, that the Tribes in question have rejected the offers made to them to remove to the Manitoulin Island, or to any other settlement of Indians in the Upper Province."

In reply to this letter, Col. Napier was informed that the Governor General having considered the petition did not perceive that the proposed removal would benefit the Indians, or that it would lead to their improvement either social or moral. That the Imperial Government had provided a refuge at Manitoulin Island for all the Indians who wished to avail themselves thereof; and that if the Algonquins and Nipissingues desired to leave their present reserve at the Lake of Two Mountains assistance would be afforded to them to remove thither; but that the Governor General was not disposed to sanction the formation of new Indian settlements in any part of the Province. In other words these Indians were asked to settle where their brethren of the Upper Province had already refused to remove to.

Here, it should be explained that, early in the 19th century a number of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians came from the United States and settled on Manitoulin Island which they claimed as part of their hunting grounds.

On the 9th of August 1836, Sir Francis Bond Head, obtained a surrender of the Island from the Indians for the purpose of settling thereon all the wandering tribes of Upper Canada as well as a number of other tribes whose reserves it was the intention of the Government to purchase. This scheme, however, was a failure as the only Indians who availed themselves of the offer made to them by the Government were some of the United States Indians and Indians from the shores of Lakes Huron and Simcoe.

By the Act 14-15 Vic. (1851) tracts of land amounting to 230,000 acres were authorized to be set apart in Lower Canada for the use of Indians in that Province; and by an Order in Council of 9th August, 1853, a distribution was made of the lands so set apart.

In connection with this distribution the claims of the Algonquins and Nipissings were to some extent, considered, as the following grants will show:-

"County of Ottawa, Lake Temiscamingue 38,400 acres. A tract extending along the River Ottawa or Des Quinze six miles in breadth on the divisional boundary line between Upper and Lower Canada at the head of Lake Temiscamingue by ten miles in depth for Nipissingues and Outaouais, nomadic Tribes inhabiting the country watered by the Ottawa adjacent to the Hudson Bay Territory."

"Ottawa County, Maniwaki or River Desert, 45,750 acres. A tract on the West banks of the Gatineau, bounded on the North East by the River Desert, and on the North and North West by the Eagle Branch, averaging nine miles in front by eight in depth. For Tribes hunting in the Territory between the St. Maurice and Gatineau, principally at the Mission of Lake of Two Mountains."

"Leinster County, Doncaster, North River 16,000 acres. A quarter Township in rear of Wexford for Iroquois of Caughnawaga and Two Mountains."

On September 24th, 1857, a petition was received from a group of Algonquins asking for a grant of 200 acres to heads of families on the shores of Golden Lake, and in forwarding the petition, T.P. French, Crown Lands Agent, Opeongo Road Agency, reported as follows:

"They state that they are of the Algonquin Tribe and that about 50 years they came to Golden Lake from the Lake of Two Mountains and that they have resided there continuously, from that period to the present."

On the 5th April 1864, Robert Bell, M.P. submitted a petition from a large number of Algonquin Indians from the Lake of Two Mountains for a grant of land in the Township of Lawrence on the Madawaska River, where their hunting grounds were situated from time immemorial. The petition reads in part:

"5 - That such a tract of land as much suit the purpose required your Petitioners have found in the Township of Lawrence in the rear of the County of Peterborough, four thousand acres of which, or thereabouts, taken off of that portion of the Township of Lawrence next adjoining the Township of Eyre, would meet all the requirements of your Petitioners, is near the hunting grounds, is suitable for their village, and would be the greatest blessing that could be bestowed upon your Petitioners and the whole Algonquin tribe, for our friends the Lumber Merchants on the Ottawa have promised to erect us a church, to aid us in our new settlement and to protect our rights should our prayer be accepted."

In his letter transmitting the Petition to the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Quebec, Mr. Bell added:

"To these petitioners, - whose hunting grounds are in Upper Canada, the land grant in the township of Maniwaki is practically valueless. It is too far from their winter quarters and from their summer routes of travel to be even accessible to them, for the expense of reaching the place is not within their reach."

In pursuance of the petition forwarded by a group of Algonquins in 1857, who had squatted in the township of South Algona and remained there hunting and fishing for a great many years, an application was made in 1859 by the Department of Indian Affairs to the Department of Crown Lands, Ontario, asking that the lands they occupied might be sold to them. In compliance with the request a report of the Executive Council approved by the Governor General the 29th January 1864, a photographic copy of which is appended hereto, authorized the sale of 1561 acres of land at 10 cents an acre in township of South Algona, County of Renfrew for the Golden Lake Band of Indians. A cheque for the sum of \$156.10 was forwarded to the Crown Lands Department on the 20th October, 1870, and patent was obtained on the 17th September, 1873 in the name of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in trust and for the benefit of the Indians of Golden Lake of the following lands: lots 3,4,5,6,7,8, 9 and 10 in the 9th concession, and lots Nos. 5,6,7,8,9, and 10 in the 10th concession, of the township of South Algona, south of Golden Lake.

It should be noted that Lot 1, containing 5.5 acres on which the R.C. church is situated never formed part of the Golden Lake Reserve and, therefore, our archives do not contain any correspondence relative to early history of the Indian Mission at this point.

There is, however, a tracing of record in this Department of the Golden Lake Indian reserve, signed by Frank Purvis, P.L.S., 22nd Feb. 1883, showing the boundary lines and the church lot as being outside the reserve. In a report on the re-survey of the Reserve dated March 15, 1913, T.J. Patton, D.L.S., O.L.S., Lot 1, on which the R.C. church is situated is again not listed as reserve land.

In view of the fact that this church lot was not included in the original purchase of the Golden Lake reserve authorized by Provincial Executive Order-in-Council of 1864, it is permissible to assume that this lot had been already disposed of at that time, presumably for mission purposes, by the Crown Lands Department of Upper Canada - Canada West. Therefore, there should be a record of the original sale of this land in the archives of the Crown Lands Dept. now the Department of Lands and Forests Ontario.